Published and Copyright (c) 1999 - 2010
All Rights Reserved

Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
Dana P. Jacobson, Publisher/Managing Editor
Joseph Mirando, Managing Editor
Rob Mahlert, Associate Editor

Atari Online News, Etc. Staff

Dana P. Jacobson -- Editor
Joe Mirando -- "People Are Talking"
Michael Burkley -- "Unabashed Atariophile"
Albert Dayes -- "CC: Classic Chips"
Rob Mahlert -- Web site
Thomas J. Andrews -- "Keeper of the Flame"

With Contributions by:

Fred Horvat

To subscribe to A-ONE, change e-mail addresses, or unsubscribe, log on to our website at: www.atarinews.org and click on "Subscriptions".
OR subscribe to A-ONE by sending a message to: dpj@atarinews.org and your address will be added to the distribution list.
To unsubscribe from A-ONE, send the following: Unsubscribe A-ONE
Please make sure that you include the same address that you used to subscribe from.

To download A-ONE, set your browser bookmarks to one of the following sites:

http://people.delphiforums.com/dpj/a-one.htm
Now available:
http://www.atarinews.org

Visit the Atari Advantage Forum on Delphi!
http://forums.delphiforums.com/atari/

=~=~=~=

A-ONE #1215 04/09/10

~ New Net Neutrality Woes ~ People Are Talking! ~ The Console Is Dying?
~ Asteroids Record Broken ~ AOL’s Bebo on Blocks! ~ More Women Web Social!

~ First Day, 300K iPads! ~ Activision Countersues ~ Bullying Issues Rise!
~ eBay To Pay Duped Buyer ~ +-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+- ~ Internet Hijacked?!

-* Apple Working on A Mini-iPad? *-
-* HP's Slate Tablet, the iPad Killer? *-
-* iPad Users: Good Luck with Wi-Fi Problems! *-

=~=~=~=

->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

One of the biggest news stories lately, at least in Massachusetts (but I'm guessing it's a national issue as well), is bullying. No, not necessarily the "typical" schoolyard bully who picks on little kids, but those who perform these acts of harassment both physically and via technology. I have some issues with bullying and the efforts to make these acts a legal issue. Don't get me wrong, I do not condone bullying and I don't have any sympathy for bullies. But, is this something that should be handled in the legal system? Sure, if bullying becomes more than what you or I knew as something a bully did in our day - something that is illegal whether it be by a bully or an adult (an adult bully notwithstanding), then certainly.

Bullies have been around since the beginning of time. For some, it's just another part of life that many have to deal with at some point or another. I remember being bullied when I was a little kid. You know what, I dealt with it. Sure, I was called names when I was a kid, because I was small and wore glasses. We had our neighborhood bullies; and we certainly tried to avoid them when we could. Not always possible. When I finally decided that I didn't want to get picked on any longer, I did something about it. I fought back, and kicked the bully's butt one day! He never bothered me again. Sometimes you just have to stand up to a bully to show him or her that you're no longer intimidated.

In Massachusetts in recent months, two teenagers committed suicide, allegedly due to being bullied. Granted, today's bullies have more "tools" to utilize to affect their bullying. Not only is there the direct, personal in-your-face tactics, but the use of technology to perform their misdeeds. Bullies (or anyone for that matter) can post pictures, stories (lies?) about you, create unflattering web sites, send text messages, and much more. More people have access to this type of online badgering, so its effects are probably more stressful.

A lot of these problems come about because parents and school systems are not teaching kids the right values. Parents also are not keeping track of what their kids are doing - whether it's out with friends or online. The problems start there. Schools need to do their part also.

When people are being bullied, that information needs to become public. There are "rules" for the wrong kind of behavior on school grounds, so schools have a course of action. Parents need to talk with other parents when this behavior becomes known. Bullies don't necessarily have the same persona that they had when I was growing up - the "big" kid picking on a scrawny little kid. Bullies these days can be anyone. So, parents need

to realize that if they hear their son or daughter is bullying someone, it could very likely be true. Bullies don't just push and shove other kids around these days to intimidate them. Instead, they're online, telling stories, and much, much worse. Like any form of bad or illegal behavior (underage drinking, sex, drug use, too many video games, etc.), parents need to deal with it and teach their kids right from wrong.

But, I have concerns about bullying "laws". What constitutes bullying? Someone calls you fat, you're a bully? Someone shoves you on the playground, you're a bully? Someone creates a Facebook page and posts a picture of you with a bad hair day, you're a bully? There are laws for sexual harassment. There are laws against assault and/or battery. You get the picture. Like most everything, correct social behavior starts in the home, and reenforced at school - or should be. I have to wonder, also, had these two young teenagers in Massachusetts not taken their own lives, would we even be hearing about bullying? Maybe it's tragic events like these that need to happen before parents and schools finally realize that they're not doing enough. Let's hope so, before another young person decides life isn't worth living by being the target of a bully in today's society.

Until next time...

=~=~=~=

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

[Editor's note: Due to personal issues this past week, there will be no People Are Talking column this week. See you in a week!]

=~=~=~=

->In This Week's Gaming Section - The Console Is Dying?
Activision Countersues!
Asteroids Record Broken!

=~=~=~=

->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!

Japan’s Video Game Visionary: The Console Is Dying

Hideo Kojima, one of the world’s most famous video game creators, sees a future for digital entertainment outside the box - outside any box.

Kojima, whose "Metal Gear Solid" games have sold more than 27 million copies, says the future of video gaming is on networks that will free players from consoles supplied by the likes of his long-time partner Sony Corp.

"In the near future, we’ll have games that don’t depend on any platform," Kojima said at a news conference announcing the latest installment in a game saga that began in 1987.

"Gamers should be able to take the experience with them in their living rooms, on the go, when they travel - wherever they are and whenever they want to play. It should be the same software and the same experience," he said.

Kojima was speaking at an event in Tokyo to detail plans for the late April launch of "Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker," a video game he developed and directed and Konami Corp is launching for Sony’s portable PSP device.

The prediction of a future without game machines from a figure regarded as both creative maverick and commercial dynamo appeared to rattle a Sony executive on hand for the event.

"It’s a bold prediction," Sony Computer Entertainment Japan President Hiroshi Kawano told reporters with a nervous smile. "We hope he continues to develop for platforms, but we deeply respect his sense of taking on a challenge."

"Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker" goes on sale in Japan at the end of April and the United States and Europe in June.

Kojima, 46, is known for sneaking pacifist themes into a game series that features stealth combat and elaborate plot lines that often reflect on the dangers of technology.

The latest installment features Metal Gear’s mercenary hero, Snake, as he and a group of soldiers of fortune set off to save Costa Rica from invasion in 1974 by a mysterious army.

Kojima said players are rewarded for cooperating and encouraged to stun and capture - not kill - enemy soldiers they encounter in order to put them to work.

"This is software that develops management skills," Kojima said. "You can even fire workers, something that you can’t really do in real life. In the game, I couldn’t stop doing it."

Kojima has said he hopes to develop movies as well as video games. Like recent Hollywood productions, his latest game is packed with product placements to bring in additional revenue, including AXE bodywash from Unilever and Doritos corn chips and Mountain Dew from PepsiCo.

Kojima said he hoped the release of the new game on Sony’s PSP device would give his development team a sense of what works in portable gaming in preparation for his vision of gaming on demand over the Internet.

"I looked at this in part as an experiment aimed at the future," he said.

Activision Countersues 'Modern Warfare' Execs

Two former studio heads overseeing last year's blockbuster video game "Modern Warfare 2" were fired for insubordination and trying to poach key employees from Activision, the gaming giant alleged in court filings.

Activision on Thursday countersued former Infinity Ward executives Jason West and Vince Zampella, who sued Activision for more than $36 million in March. West and Zampella's lawsuit claimed they were fired so Activision could avoid paying them hefty royalties for their work on the popular "Call of Duty" franchise.

Activision's filing seeks to show the firing was justified and claims the men met with a key gaming rival, which it says was one of several violations of their employment contract.

Infinity Ward is the studio behind last fall's record-breaking release, "Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2," and other games. "Modern Warfare 2" was No. 1 last year and has become one of the best-selling video games of all time.

The breach of contract suit claims West and Zampella held up development on other "Call of Duty" games to try to gain more money. The company is seeking to withhold additional payments to the men, who they claim also kept bonuses from Infinity Ward employees.

The men "morphed from valued, responsible executives into insubordinate and self-serving schemers who attempted to hijack Activision's assets for their own personal gain and whose actions threatened both the future of the Call of Duty franchise and future of Activision's (Infinity Ward) studio," the complaint states.

The lawsuit alleges the bonuses were withheld in an attempt to try to leverage other key employees to leave Santa Monica-based Activision.

Robert M. Schwartz, an attorney who represents West and Zampella, did not immediately return a phone message seeking comment Friday.

The filing does not state by name which rival West and Zampella are accused of meeting with, but states they were flown by the rival to Northern California. Gaming giant Electronic Arts, which is Activision's main rival and produces the competitor franchise "Medal of Honor," is based in Northern California.

The cases are filed in Santa Monica, where Activision is based. The company is majority owned by French conglomerate Vivendi SA.

=~=~=~=

"""""""""""""""""""""

Seattle Man Playing Asteroids Surpasses All-Time Record

After 58 straight hours of playing Asteroids in a friend's basement in Hillsboro, a Seattle man is presumed to have surpassed the all-time record store achieved on the Atari-brand arcade video game.

At about 10:15 p.m. Monday, John McAllister finished his marathon game of Asteroids with a final score of 41,338,740 points. According to the website of Twin Galaxies - the authority on video game scores and scoring - the previous record for Asteroids is 41,336,440, which was set in November 1982.

McAllister's score will now be submitted to Twin Galaxies for official verification. He said he'll undergo a drug test, and he'll submit videotaped proof of his record-breaking performance.

John McAllister holds records in other arcade games, including Asteroids Deluxe, which have been verified and documented by Twin Galaxies. He tried beating the Asteroids high score once before, but gave up after 36 hours of game play. He credits the support of friends for his latest conquest. He said his friends even contacted Nolan Bushnell, the creator of Atari - who said he would be keeping an eye on McAllister's efforts.

When asked why he focused on being the best at Asteroids, McAllister said, "It's basically considered a Holy Grail... It was a title that a lot of people would want, and I wanted it."

But despite his pending claim to fame, he remains humble. "There are other players that I look up to that are even better than myself," McAllister said. "I've just had the resources and desire to go after certain titles."

=~=~=~=

A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

FCC Loses Key Ruling on Internet 'Neutrality'

A federal court threw the future of Internet regulations into doubt Tuesday with a far-reaching decision that went against the Federal Communications Commission and could even hamper the government's plans to expand broadband access in the United States.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia ruled that the FCC lacks authority to require broadband providers to give equal treatment to all Internet traffic flowing over their networks. That was a big victory

for Comcast Corp., the nation’s largest cable company, which had challenged the FCC’s authority to impose such "network neutrality" obligations on broadband providers.

Supporters of network neutrality, including the FCC chairman, have argued that the policy is necessary to prevent broadband providers from favoring or discriminating against certain Web sites and online services, such as Internet phone programs or software that runs in a Web browser. Advocates contend there is precedent: Nondiscrimination rules have traditionally applied to so-called "common carrier" networks that serve the public, from roads and highways to electrical grids and telephone lines.

But broadband providers such as Comcast, AT&T Inc. and Verizon Communications Inc. argue that after spending billions of dollars on their networks, they should be able to sell premium services and manage their systems to prevent certain applications from hogging capacity.

Tuesday’s unanimous ruling by the three-judge panel was a setback for the FCC because it questioned the agency’s authority to regulate broadband. That could cause problems beyond the FCC’s effort to adopt official net neutrality regulations. It also has serious implications for the ambitious national broadband-expansion plan released by the FCC last month. The FCC needs the authority to regulate broadband so that it can push ahead with some of the plan’s key recommendations. Among other things, the FCC proposes to expand broadband by tapping the federal fund that subsidizes telephone service in poor and rural communities.

In a statement, the FCC said it remains "firmly committed to promoting an open Internet and to policies that will bring the enormous benefits of broadband to all Americans" and "will rest these policies ... on a solid legal foundation."

Comcast welcomed the decision, saying "our primary goal was always to clear our name and reputation."

The case centers on Comcast’s actions in 2007 when it interfered with an online file-sharing service called BitTorrent, which lets people swap movies and other big files over the Internet. The next year the FCC banned Comcast from blocking subscribers from using BitTorrent. The commission, at the time headed by Republican Kevin Martin, based its order on a set of net neutrality principles it had adopted in 2005.

But Comcast argued that the FCC order was illegal because the agency was seeking to enforce mere policy principles, which don’t have the force of regulations or law. That’s one reason that Martin’s successor, Democratic FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski, is trying to formalize those rules.

The cable company had also argued the FCC lacks authority to mandate net neutrality because it had deregulated broadband under the Bush administration, a decision upheld by the Supreme Court in 2005.

The FCC now defines broadband as a lightly regulated information service. That means it is not subject to the "common carrier" obligations that make traditional telecommunications services share their networks with competitors and treat all traffic equally. But the FCC maintains that existing law gives it authority to set rules for information services.

Tuesday’s court decision rejected that reasoning, concluding that Congress has not given the FCC "untrammeled freedom" to regulate without explicit legal authority.

With so much at stake, the FCC now has several options. It could ask Congress to give it explicit authority to regulate broadband. Or it could appeal Tuesday's decision.

But both of those steps could take too long because the agency "has too many important things they have to do right away," said Ben Scott, policy director for the public interest group Free Press. Free Press was among the groups that alerted the FCC after The Associated Press ran tests and reported that Comcast was interfering with attempts by some subscribers to share files online.

Scott believes that the likeliest step by the FCC is that it will simply reclassify broadband as a more heavily regulated telecommunications service. That, ironically, could be the worst-case outcome from the perspective of the phone and cable companies.

"Comcast swung an ax at the FCC to protest the BitTorrent order," Scott said. "And they sliced right through the FCC's arm and plunged the ax into their own back."

The battle over the FCC's legal jurisdiction comes amid a larger policy dispute over the merits of net neutrality. Backed by Internet companies such as Google Inc. and the online calling service Skype, the FCC says rules are needed to prevent phone and cable companies from prioritizing some traffic or degrading or services that compete with their core businesses. Indeed, BitTorrent can be used to transfer large files such as online video, which could threaten Comcast's cable TV business.

But broadband providers point to the fact that applications such as BitTorrent use an outsized amount of network capacity.

For its part, the FCC offered no details on its next step, but stressed that it remains committed to the principle of net neutrality.

"Today's court decision invalidated the prior commission's approach to preserving an open Internet," the agency's statement said. "But the court in no way disagreed with the importance of preserving a free and open Internet; nor did it close the door to other methods for achieving this important end."

Apple Sells More Than 300,000 iPads on First Day

Apple Inc. said Monday that it delivered more than 300,000 iPads on its opening day, meeting expectations of some analysts while underscoring the challenges the company still faces marketing the device beyond early adopters.

The total seemed modest given the weeks of hype about the revolutionary nature of Apple's new touch-screen tablet device. Furthermore, the figures included pre-orders that were picked up or delivered Saturday and iPads sent to retail stores such as Best Buy but not necessarily purchased. Apple did not say how many went to such stores.

Assuming most of the 300,000 iPads ended up in the hands of consumers Saturday, though, the figure is in line with the number of iPhones that Apple sold when the smart phone made its debut in June 2007. Apple didn't

publicize first-day sales at the time, but later earnings reports indicated the company sold about 270,000 iPhones during the first two days the gadget was available.

Apple sold 1.1 million more iPhones over the next three months. The volume has only increased as Apple has released new versions of the phone in a growing number of countries and software developers have created add-on programs, or "apps," that do everything from online banking to mapping bike rides using GPS. In the most recent quarter, Apple sold 8.7 million iPhones.

Kaufman Bros. analyst Shaw Wu wrote in a note to investors Monday that he believes a similar pattern will unfold for the iPad.

"When the iPhone was first launched, it was also somewhat of a disappointment," Wu wrote. "But as the iPhone got more refined, with more apps, better software, not to mention better prices," then sales picked up.

Wu had estimated the iPad's sales at 250,000 to 300,000 for the weekend. In the research note, the analyst wrote that manufacturers said Apple was telling them to get ready to ship 10 million iPads in the first 12 months, twice as many as previously expected.

With the iPad in its early days, the iPhone will continue as Apple's star product this year, Broadpoint Amtech analyst Brian Marshall said in a note to investors Monday. Marshall had predicted Apple would sell 525,000 iPads over the Easter weekend, despite some stores being closed for the holiday.

The iPad is "off to a fantastic start," he wrote, but he still expects iPhone sales to top $20 billion this year, eight times his forecast of $2.5 billion for the iPad.

The same hoopla that drew eager shoppers to long lines outside of Apple stores swept away a few analysts, too. Piper Jaffray analyst Gene Munster published a research note early Monday boosting his initial forecast for first-day sales to 600,000 to 700,000 - only to quickly follow with a second note admitting he'd jumped the gun.

"We were overly optimistic," he wrote. Munster's original forecast was for 200,000 to 300,000 iPads to be sold on Saturday.

However, Munster wrote that he still expects Apple to sell 1.3 million iPads in the current quarter.

Apple devotees were willing to queue up across the country to be among the first to own an iPad, even if they weren't exactly sure what they'd end up using it for. The models currently on sale connect to the Internet using Wi-Fi; prices start at $499. A second wave of buyers may emerge when Apple starts selling versions that can also get online using cellular networks; those models start at $629.

Once the early excitement settles, Apple needs to convince a broader swath of people to buy if it wants the iPad to follow the iPhone's successful trajectory.

Many companies have tried to sell tablet computers before, but none has caught on with mainstream consumers. Apple's iPad comes at a time when people have even more Internet-connected gadgets - smart phones, laptops, e-book readers, set-top boxes and home broadband connections - and it may

need to work harder to persuade people to buy yet another device that serves many of the same purposes.

Apple also said Monday that new iPad owners downloaded more than a million applications and more than 250,000 electronic books from its iTunes store on Saturday.

HP Promises Everything The iPad Isn’t with Slate

HP released a new video showing off its upcoming "iPad killer" - the Slate tablet PC. The video is reminiscent of Verizon’s "Droid Does" campaign highlighting all of the capabilities of the Android-based Droid that the Apple iPhone can’t deliver. In a mere 30 seconds HP manages to demonstrate that its tablet is - in a nutshell - everything Apple’s iPad isn’t.

The HP Slate, on the other hand, may be another story. All of the features and functions lacking in the Apple iPad as a business tool or notebook replacement, exist on the HP Slate. Apple has succeeded in bringing the tablet PC concept to the mainstream consciousness, but HP has the benefit of riding the tablet wave, while also learning from Apple’s mistakes and introducing a tablet that fills the perceived holes in the iPad.

* Camera / video*. The camera, and the ability to record video may be more consumer gadget than business tool, but video conferencing is becoming mainstream and mobile business professionals rely on it. The HP Slate video demonstrates a two-way video call using Skype - indicating that the Slate will have both front and rear-facing cameras.

* USB ports*. Apple is known for creating exemplary user experiences, but those user experiences come with locked-down, proprietary hardware. The HP Slate has USB ports - enabling attachment of external storage, and other USB-enabled devices just like on a standard desktop or notebook PC.

* SD memory expansion*. USB devices can be used to expand storage capacity on the tablet, but SD memory cards are a much less obtrusive way to do so. With the Apple iPad, whatever storage capacity you purchase is the storage capacity you are stuck with - there is no option to expand it if necessary. The Slate has an SD memory card slot.

* Software*. The HP Slate is a Windows 7-based device. You can install the software you are used to rather than just the apps approved by Apple. Granted, there are 150,000 apps in the Apple App Store, and already thousands of iPad-specific apps, but there will inevitably be software you use on a daily basis that just won’t work on an iPad. The video shows the HP Slate with iTunes, Skype, and the Mozilla Firefox Web browser installed.

* Adobe Flash*. Arguably one of the most-discussed gaps in iPad functionality is the lack of support for Adobe Flash. I am of the opinion that the Web should be standards-based and not rely on a proprietary technology like Flash, but its hard to argue with the fact that Flash is fairly ubiquitous on the Web today.

As much as the community at large has debated the value of the iPad as a business tool - Apple failed to hold up its end. Apple was so focused on building a consumer gadget that it left off critical elements that could have let the iPad not just be used as a business tool - but dominate as a business tool.

The iPad is a success, and it has significantly more business functionality than iPad naysayers would have you believe, but Apple left the door open for HP and others to ride on iPad's coattails and deliver a true business-capable tablet device. Apple will end up either accepting its role as a niche consumer gadget - a role it is familiar and comfortable with - or be forced to play catch up with devices like the Slate as it develops the iPad 2.0.

The bottom line is that the HP Slate is a significant device. It may not "beat" the iPad in total sales, and it may not cause the sort of hyperbole and excitement that Apple brought with the iPad, but even if it ends up as only the second-best tablet on the market, it will be a win for HP and a significant step for Windows 7-based tablets.

Rumors Have Apple Already Working on a Smaller iPad

A cottage industry of rumors surrounded Apple's iPad until it was unveiled in late January. And now, only a few days out from the device's launch, a new report says the Cupertino, Calif.-based company is planning to release a mini-iPad.

DigiTimes, a publication that focuses on the electronics industries in China and Taiwan, is reporting that Apple is working on a smaller iPad that features a five- to seven-inch screen. The iPad currently has a 9.7-inch display.

According to the publication, the device will retail for under $400 and is planned for release during the first quarter next year. The least expensive iPad, the 16GB Wi-Fi, lists for $499.

A device of this size might be geared more toward users wanting to read e-books and consume various types of media than toward the users who want to write and conduct some computing activities. If an "iPad Nano" did emerge, it would likely be positioned directly against Amazon.com's Kindle, the Sony Reader, and Barnes & Noble's nook, among other e-readers.

The report is based on unnamed sources at components manufacturers, which, given the publication's focus and Apple's manufacturing structure, may be based in Asia.

Ross Rubin, director of industry analysis for consumer technology at the NPD Group, said he "wouldn't say it couldn't happen, but it would be unusual for Apple to release a 'tweener' product" not that long after the iPad's launch.

If Apple's plan had been to cover that end of the market, he added, "we probably would have seen the initial iPad being released with a seven-inch screen" instead of the 9.7-inch screen.

However, Rubin did say we might see an iPhone with a slightly larger screen. While the differences are literally measured within a few inches, an iPhone with a screen up to 1.5 inches larger might still be considered a smartphone.

The key distinction, Rubin said, is whether the device would be able to be easily used as a handset against the user's ear, or to readily fit

into an average pocket. He noted that, although one could use a Bluetooth headset to deal with the ear issue, most observers see five inches as the maximum size for a smartphone.

There have been reports and speculation that a new iPhone will be released within the next few months, possibly as early as this summer. Much of the speculation to date, however, has focused on connectivity rather than the screen size and uses.

Verizon Wireless CEO Ivan Seidenberg said Tuesday that he hopes to carry the iPhone at some point, preferably one supporting the network's next-generation LTE 4G technology. Various news media have reported that a CDMA iPhone is in the works, although it would not work with Verizon's LTE technology.

iPad Users: Good Luck With Those Wi-Fi Problems

If your iPad is having trouble connecting to the Internet due to Wi-Fi issues, we have good news and bad news.

The good news is that Apple has acknowledged the problem and offered a list of possible solutions, and Apple's forumgoers have chimed in with their own fixes. The bad news is you have to troubleshoot from a long list of potential problems to figure out what's really wrong.

In other words, don't expect an easy patch that'll make all the iPad's Wi-Fi troubles go away.

Let's start with the one workaround Apple is offering. The company notes that "under certain conditions," the iPad doesn't automatically reconnect to Wi-Fi after waking from sleep mode. The solution applies only to multi-band routers, and requires users to create separate Wi-Fi profiles for each band.

Apple forum member "batzgam" found a weirder solution to he no-Wi-Fi-after-sleep problem: Set the iPad's brightness above minimum. "I don't know if this is a bug, or an undocumented power-saving feature for low-power night reading, but I'm happy with my iPad again," batzgam wrote. Other users found success with the same fix.

Apple's other tips are more general, such as "move closer to the Wi-Fi router or hotspot," or "check for any sources of potential interference," such as microwave ovens. My advice? Go to a coffee shop or library that you know has free, public Wi-Fi (think of it as a chance to show off your new, not totally functional slab of hardware). If the iPad connects, it's a router problem. If not, it's an iPad problem.

At least one iPad owner claims that problems with weak or intermittent signals went away after exchanging the iPad at the Apple store. I doubt Apple will encourage people to do this, but it's worth keeping in mind after exhausting all these other options.

AOL Looking To Sell Or Shut Down Social Site Bebo

The struggling Internet company AOL Inc. plans to sell or shut down the online community Bebo nearly two years after buying it for $850 million in an expansion of its social-networking ambitions.

In an e-mail to employees Tuesday, Jon Brod, who runs AOL's startup acquisition and investment unit, AOL Ventures, said Bebo would need a "significant investment" to remain competitive.

Although Bebo has been in the shadow of rivals such as Facebook, it has been strong in foreign markets, including Britain. AOL wanted to tap that strength abroad to drive traffic to AOL's other free, ad-supported Web sites, especially internationally, while leveraging AOL's instant-messaging communities, AIM and ICQ, to try to grow Bebo in the United States.

But Bebo's audience has instead been slipping in the U.S. According to comScore Inc., Bebo had 5.1 million U.S. users in February, down from 5.8 million a year earlier and a sliver of the 210 million that Facebook has.

Brod said AOL will look for potential buyers and plans to finish a strategic evaluation by the end of May.

The $850 million in cash that AOL paid for San Francisco-based Bebo in May 2008 made it AOL's largest deal since it bought MapQuest for $1 billion in 2000 (not counting AOL's $106 billion purchase of Time Warner in 2001). At the time, AOL was still joined with Time Warner Inc., but it separated from the media conglomerate late last year.

Since spinning off from Time Warner, AOL has sold one property: affiliate marketing business Buy.at, which it sold in March to Digital Window Ltd. for an undisclosed price. Digital Window runs a network of affiliate marketing sites, which steer customers to e-commerce sites in exchange for a cut of sales.

AOL, a pioneer in the dial-up Internet business during the '90s, has been trying to streamline and concentrate on rebuilding itself as a content and advertising business. It runs dozens of Web sites, including popular tech blog Engadget and personal finance site WalletPop.

Clayton Moran, an analyst at The Benchmark Co., said the price AOL paid for Bebo was questioned from the start.

"It made a lot of industry watchers scratch their heads," Moran said. "At this point they probably would admit they overpaid for it and now they're just cleaning it up."

He said that if AOL does sell Bebo, it would likely fetch a fraction of its original purchase price.

A Chinese ISP Momentarily Hijacks the Internet

For the second time in two weeks, bad networking information spreading from China has disrupted the Internet.

On Thursday morning, bad routing data from a small Chinese ISP called IDC China Telecommunication was re-transmitted by China's state-owned

China Telecommunications, and then spread around the Internet, affecting Internet service providers such as AT&T, Level3, Deutsche Telekom, Qwest Communications and Telefonica.

"There are a large number of ISPs who accepted these routes all over the world," said Martin A. Brown, technical lead at Internet monitoring firm Renesys.

According to Brown, the incident started just before 10 a.m. Eastern Time on Thursday and lasted about 20 minutes. During that time IDC China Telecommunication transmitted bad routing information for between 32,000 and 37,000 networks, redirecting them to IDC China Telecommunication instead of their rightful owners.

These networks included about 8,000 U.S. networks including those operated by Dell, CNN, Starbucks and Apple. More than 8,500 Chinese networks,1,100 in Australia and 230 owned by France Telecom were also affected.

The bad routes may have simply caused all Internet traffic to these networks to not get through, or they could have been used to redirect traffic to malicious computers in China.

While the incident appears to have been an accident, it underscores the weakness of the Border Gateway Protocol (BGP), a critical, but obscure, protocol used to bind the Internet together.

BGP data is used by routers to tell them how to route traffic over the Internet. Typically smaller service providers "announce" BGP routes for the networks they control, and that information is ultimately centralized and then shared between larger providers. That’s where the problems started on Thursday. For some reason, IDC China Telecommunication announced routes for tens of thousands of networks - about 10 percent of the Internet. Typically this small ISP announces about 30 routes.

That bad information was then accepted by the larger China Telecommunications, which shared the data with other major ISPs. Within minutes the bad data had spread around the globe.

ISPs may have accepted the hijacked route information, but that doesn’t necessarily mean that a lot of Web surfers got redirected. It’s common for routers to learn several BGP routes, and then route traffic to what they consider the best route. Often they choose the shortest route available. So most routers in the U.S. would have routed traffic to Apple’s servers, for example, instead of IDC China Telecommunication.

"I don’t believe there was really widespread impact, but some people must have noticed it," said Andree Toonk, founder and lead developer of BGPmon.net, a BGP monitoring service that has been tracking the situation. "Many people probably didn’t prefer the path because they had a better path."

There may have been more disruptions in Asia, however, where the IDC China Telecommunication route would have seemed shorter, but users were definitely affected, Brown said. "We saw routers in Belgium, Indonesia, Portugal, Thailand and the U.S. - to name a few - which were selecting these false routes," he said.

Arbor Networks Chief Security Officer Danny McPherson believes that a large number of users were probably affected, even if only for a short

time. Worse, the tens of thousands of bad routes may have just been a cover for a single targeted attack, he said.

IDC China Telecommunication could not immediately be reached for comment Thursday.

Because so many Chinese networks were also disrupted by the incident, security experts believe that it was probably unintentional.

This isn’t the first time that bad BGP routes have caused problems on the Internet.

Two weeks ago a bad BGP route from China leaked out and redirected some Chilean Internet traffic to a root DNS (Domain Name System) server in China. And two years ago, bad BGP routing information from Pakistan caused YouTube to temporarily disappear from the Internet.

Speaking about Thursday’s incident, OpenDNS CEO David Ulevitch said, "It’s not clear whether it’s deliberate, but it’s serious."

"These things highlight just how fragile BGP is," he added.

eBay To Pay Damages to Duped Austrian Gold Buyer

Online auction giant eBay is to pay more than 16,000 euros in damages to a user who never received the gold bars bought on its site from a fraudulent seller, following the first such court ruling.

The duped Austrian bought one kilogramme of gold from German company ML Agentur via eBay in September 2007 but never received the ingots after payment.

ML Agentur which has a police record in Germany for fraud has since gone bankrupt.

eBay advertised the company as a "power seller", a particularly trustworthy vendor according to the auction site’s own criteria, despite complaints, notably regarding its times of delivery.

Ordering eBay to pay 16,463 euros (22,000 dollars), the court said the auction site had been aware of ML Agentur’s record before the gold bar transaction was made and was therefore guilty of negligence.

Consumer defence website www.falle-internet.de said the decision by the court in the northern city of Sankt Poelten was the first such ruling to hit eBay.

ML Agentur reported monthly sales of more than 400,000 euros in 2007, of which eBay would have received a percentage.

Austrian newspaper Die Presse quoted eBay critics as saying the auction site was lax in controlling sellers to make sure it can pocket the fees it charges.

More Women Embracing Web Communities

In a sharp reversal, more young women are now embracing online communities than their male counterparts, a new study says.

By contrast, men are showing some signs of "networking fatigue," with fewer men saying that their online communities are as important as their offline equivalents.

The shift in attitudes between the two sexes has taken place over just a couple of years.

Researchers at the University of Southern California are reporting this week that 67 percent of women under 40 said they feel as strongly about their Internet communities as their offline ones, while only 38 percent of men said the same.

In 2007, the numbers were just the reverse, with 69 percent of the men and 35 percent of the women feeling that way.

Internet communities don’t just mean social networks such as Facebook and MySpace, but include online gathering sites focused on hobbies, politics or spirituality.

Michael Gilbert, senior fellow at USC’s Annenberg Center for the Digital Future, said women tend to adopt new technologies more slowly than men, but once they do, they catch up and often surpass men in their enthusiasm.

Men made up the bulk of the shoppers who lined up Saturday to get their hands on Apple’s new iPad in many cities including Seattle and New York, but that doesn’t mean that gender disparity is permanent.

Gilbert said women are finding deeper connections to Web communities because many of them go there for social reasons rather than to find information about hobbies, for example. Men, especially those from 25 to 39, are disengaging from social networks.

"The infatuation is over," he said.

In 2005, 77 percent of men under 40 said their online community was "extremely important." That number has now dropped to 39 percent.

The latest findings are part of the Annenberg Center’s decade-long study of 2,000 families and their digital habits. It has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

Teen Suicide Puts Spotlight on High-Tech Bullying

The case of a teenager in Massachusetts who killed herself after a relentless, months-long bullying campaign shows how the common schoolyard behavior is evolving in dangerous new ways online.

Six students face felony charges in the death of Phoebe Prince, 15, who hanged herself in January after being subjected to verbal assault and threats of physical harm. Some harassment occurred online on Facebook, in text messages and in other high-tech forms, a contemporary development in the age-old practice, experts said.

The bullying of Prince "far exceeded the limits of normal teenage relationship-related quarrels," said Elizabeth Scheibel, prosecutor in the South Hadley, Massachusetts, case.

Prince was targeted with such insults as "whore" after she dated a popular high school football player, who had also dated one of the accused girls. Prince was a newcomer from County Clare, Ireland, and had attended boarding school in Limerick.

The accused girls have come under online attack since Prince's death with fake websites set up under their names linked to media accounts of the case. The sites attracted reams of anonymous comments and threats.

Allegations that school officials knew of the bullying but failed to intervene have sparked outrage.

"The actions - or inactions - of some adults at the school are troublesome," Scheibel said.

But no adults have been charged in the case. Scheibel said their failure to help did not amount to criminal behavior.

"The school knew something," said Judith Vessey, a professor at the Connell School of Nursing at Boston College who has done extensive research on bullying. "The mother knew something. Friends and bystanders knew something.

"A lot of people knew what was happening and could have intervened."

Intervention by bystanders is crucial to stopping the downward spiral in bullying cases, she said.

"You would like to think that people would examine their own role and what they could do to make it not happen again, said Scott Seider, professor at Boston University's School of Education.

Three girls were arraigned and pleaded not guilty in Prince's case this week to a variety of civil rights violations and stalking charges. A fourth girl and two boys face similar charges. The boys, both of whom briefly dated Prince, also are charged with statutory rape.

Bullying is pervasive in U.S. schools. A U.S. Department of Education report in 2005 found 14 percent of students aged 12 through 18 said they were bullied in the previous six months.

The typical concept of bullying - intimidation of a child perceived as weak by another - is too simple, Vessey said.

"Especially in girls, bullying can be about social toxicity," she said, describing "eye rolls, the exclusions, the whole 'mean girls' thing."

"One of the things that puts kids at risk is the notion of difference," she said. "This young woman had those risk factors."

On the day she hanged herself from a stairwell, Prince was verbally harassed in the school library, in the hallways and while walking home from school, prosecutors said.

Bullying may play a bigger role than is commonly understood in teen

suicide, experts also said. The annual suicide rate among Americans 15 to 19 years old is about seven per 100,000, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Teenage boys are more likely to commit suicide than are girls.

A CDC study also showed 14.5 percent of U.S. high school students reported seriously considering suicide during the year preceding the survey, and 6.9 percent said they had attempted suicide once or more in the same period.

Massachusetts lawmakers in March approved a bill that would ban bullying, including cyber-bullying, but versions of the bill must be reconciled by lawmakers before it can become law.

The legislation came in response to the Prince case and the suicide of an 11-year-old boy in Springfield, Massachusetts, last year. Carl Joseph Walker-Hoover had been subject to relentless anti-gay taunts before killing himself.

Having a statute may do little to stop bullying and could make children more wary of reporting incidents and setting themselves up for retribution, Vessey said.

"When you have a zero-tolerance program, kids won’t tell on one another," she said.

=~=~=~=

Atari Online News, Etc. is a weekly publication covering the entire Atari community. Reprint permission is granted, unless otherwise noted at the beginning of any article, to Atari user groups and not for profit publications only under the following terms: articles must remain unedited and include the issue number and author at the top of each article reprinted. Other reprints granted upon approval of request. Send requests to: dpj@atarinews.org

No issue of Atari Online News, Etc. may be included on any commercial media, nor uploaded or transmitted to any commercial online service or internet site, in whole or in part, by any agent or means, without the expressed consent or permission from the Publisher or Editor of Atari Online News, Etc.

Opinions presented herein are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the staff, or of the publishers. All material herein is believed to be accurate at the time of publishing.